14/11-42

National Committee for a Free Europe, Inc.

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CABLE ADDRESS: NATFECOMM

STRICTLY PRIVATE

September 28, 1950

Dear Allen:

I go along heartily with the idea you expressed the other day on the phone that the NCFE position ought to be re-examined soon at high level. The need for this is natural after a year and a half of rapid growth; and the changes in personnel which you mentioned also make it appropriate.

One basic item in the situation much emphasized to me by FW at the outset of our venture was an understanding between him and State that all "policy guidance" from State would reach NCFE only through FW's office. This restriction appears in the fundamental memorandum agreed to by you and Frank Altschul and me October 1949, in the following terms:

> "Policy Guidance. On all activities directly or indirectly affecting (governmental or State Department policy), official policy guidance will be given or confirmed through (FW's office) and (FW's office) shall be the sole channel for the purpose."

The ensuing paragraph reads as follows:

> "Liaison. Nothing in this outline shall be interpreted to discourage the officers or staff members of NCFE from establishing or maintaining such normal relationships as any private citizens or organizations might have with any government official or agency."

Despite the broad exception of the second paragraph FW has exhibited always a strong dislike of direct contacts with State personnel, by me in particular. This was especially marked when I mentioned to him one day last July that I was lunching with Charles Yost and Fred Reinhardt, on the basis of old friendship but with a view also to some informal talk about the Council for Free Czechoslovakia. The general result has been for me to keep away from State and my old friends there.

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Direct working relations with State have developed on a considerable scale on the technical side of radio--with Peter Mero taking a leading part. I do not think it is always quite clear for whom Peter is speaking at any given moment, but up to now, so far as I can make out, things are working out in practice pretty well. Bob Lang spoke to me in that encouraging sense a few days ago.

On the programming side of radio we have received some scattered "directives" from FW's staff, but the directives, or some of them, don't make too much sense, and here the situation cannot be said to be satisfactory at all. Nor has coordination between us and the Voice been worked out as it should be and I think can be.

Relations with the exiles and the national councils constitute obviously a most important area in which close working contact with Washington is essential. Experience so far has been anything but satisfactory. Barnes and Offie misled us badly regarding efforts to form a Yugoslav national committee. Apparently they gave us (as coming presumably from State) what was mainly their own line. When the line, about which Fred Dolbeare had all along had grave misgivings, came to the full attention of State, it was rejected and we were left holding the bag uncomfortably.

We have now before us as an increasingly insistent problem the basic pattern of our relations with the exile groups. The concept of national councils we inherited, and we have certainly given it a very fair trial. The score to date isn't good. The Rumanian National Council is now practically dissolved. That leaves Bulgarian, Czechoslovak and Hungarian Councils. The first is a one-man show. Only the Hungarian is anywhere near satisfactory. A Polish or a Yugoslav national council is nowhere in sight.

Both Adolf Berle and I incline to believe that some other system should be tried. In any case the problem must be carefully re-examined. To do this well I think that Berle, Fred Dolbeare and I, and certainly you, if you can find time, should talk it over at length with Fred Reinhardt and others at State and Bob Kelley representing FW. Almost certainly NCFE would be ready to carry on with any program formulated following all-around consultation, but it seems to me just nonsense for anyone to attempt to fix a policy on exile relationships without extended consultation with us.

As things now stand, we have had a recent "instruction" from Bob Kelley. A copy is enclosed. How much this is Bob Kelley and how much State I can't tell you. Theoretically it seems an exemplary document; but it is entirely theoretical in that it proceeds from an assumption, which has already been in good part disproved, that representative and effective committees can indeed be formed among the exiles. In any case, I submit, that the knowledge and experience on exile matters which exist within NCFE itself should be drawn into consultation whenever a basic outline of this kind needs to be prepared.

The whole NCFE operation has outgrown by far original conceptions and arrangements. As this marks the success of the original idea, everybody ought to be happy about it and join gladly in the readjustments consequently needed. I am glad you are opening the way for the needed top-level discussions.

Always yours,

DeWitt C. Poole